

# Stories Behind the Soaring Sound

I have enjoyed it hundreds, if not thousands, of times



at Concerts, Convocations, Recitals, Weddings and Worship Services.

But I confess that I haven't really stopped to find out more about it until now.

The organ in Wesley Chapel has been a major player in many stories.

- Dedication
- Celebration
- Meditation
- Inauguration

The music played on this organ has

- Lifted our spirits
- Comforted our souls
- Given great enjoyment and inspiration

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The organ in Wesley Chapel was built by the Casavant Freres Organ Builders. That company was founded in Quebec, Canada in 1879 by two brothers, Claver and Samuel Casavant, who shared a love of the craft of organ building. They traveled extensively throughout Europe studying organs and those who built them. Their organs are thought to be among the finest in the world.

When President Stanley H. Martin was working on plans for Wesley Chapel, he drew heavily from his experience at Boston University. He taught there, and was the first chaplain at Marsh Chapel when it was built in 1950. Sure enough, the organ in that building is also built by the Casavant Freres Organ Builders.

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### **Installation Dates and Delays**

Some delays due to a labor strike in England apparently prevented the organ from being ready for the October 29, 1967 Chapel Dedication ceremony. The program does not mention this, so the programs must have already been printed prior to this story in the Pharos on October 24.

Clear back on page three was this brief notice:



## WC Organ Not Ready

The Casavante Freres organ for the new chapel is only partially installed and will not be ready for the dedication service on October 20.

The organ was manufactured by one of the most renowned organ makers in the world, Casavante Freres Limited, a Canadian firm.

The company installed all of the platforms and large organ pipes this past summer. One accessory, a metal grill which will be installed in the opening of the organ chamber, has yet to arrive. The grill is being made in England and for some unknown reason, construction is behind schedule. The grill is to be set so close to the small organ pipes that the company refused to install them until the grill arrived. After the grill is installed, it will take two weeks for organ installation and seven weeks for tuning and voicing.

By January 23, 1968 the headlines said:

\$130,000

## Grand Organ Installed

Installation of Wesley chapel's organ begins today according to Chaplain Sydney Davis. Chapel services for this morning have been cancelled, but services will be held as usual next week.

The \$130,000 organ and Sculmerich chimneys were donated by local persons who prefer to remain anonymous.

Installation and tuning of pipes for the organ will continue for approximately six weeks, and dedication of the organ will take place March 3 in the first of a series of organ recitals to be given this semester.

Rich Eisasser will be first guest organist. Eisasser is best noted for having memorized the complete works of Bach at age 19. He is the second person to have done so.

Eisasser maintains offices in the Midwest, Hollywood and New York.

Installation, originally scheduled for completion early last semester, was held up by a delay in shipment of a metal screen to be put in front of the 4,174 pipes of the organ.

The screen, made in England, was held up due to a strike and was not shipped until last month.

Casavante Freres of Toronto, Canada, makers of the organ, are in charge of installation of the organ and pipes.

The screen had to be installed prior to the pipes which have been available since last semester. In order to install the screen, workmen had to work behind the screen in the area in which the pipes are

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## Grand Organ

(Continued from page 1)

to be put.

Contractors were afraid that in the process of screen installation, pipes might be damaged, so the decision was made to install the screen first.

Following pipe installation, pipes must be tuned or "voiced." This procedure will take approximately five weeks.

"We hope to be able to use the organ within six weeks," Robert Shafer, official college organist, said.

The print is small, so I will transcribe it here:

*Installation of Wesley Chapel's organ begins today, according to Chaplain Sydney Davis. Chapel services for this morning have been cancelled, but services will be held as usual next week.*

*The \$130,000 organ and Sculmerich chimes were donated by local persons who prefer to remain anonymous.*

*Installation and tuning of pipes for the organ will continue for approximately six weeks, and dedication of the organ will take place March 3 in the first of a series of organ recitals to be given this semester.*

*Richard Ellsasser is best noted for having memorized the complete works of Bach at age 19. He is the second person to have done so.*

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*The screen, made in England, was held up due to a strike and was not shipped until last month.*

*Casavant Freres of Toronto, Canada, makers of the organ, are in charge of installation of the organ and pipes.*

*The screen had to be installed prior to the pipes which have been available since last semester. In order to install the screen, workmen had to work behind the screen in the area in which the pipes are to be put.*

*Contractors were afraid that in the process of screen installation, pipes might be damaged, so the decision was made to install the screen first.*

*Following pipe installation, pipes must be tuned or “voiced.” This procedure will take approximately five weeks.*

*“We hope to be able to use the organ within six weeks,” Robert Shafer, official college organist, said.*

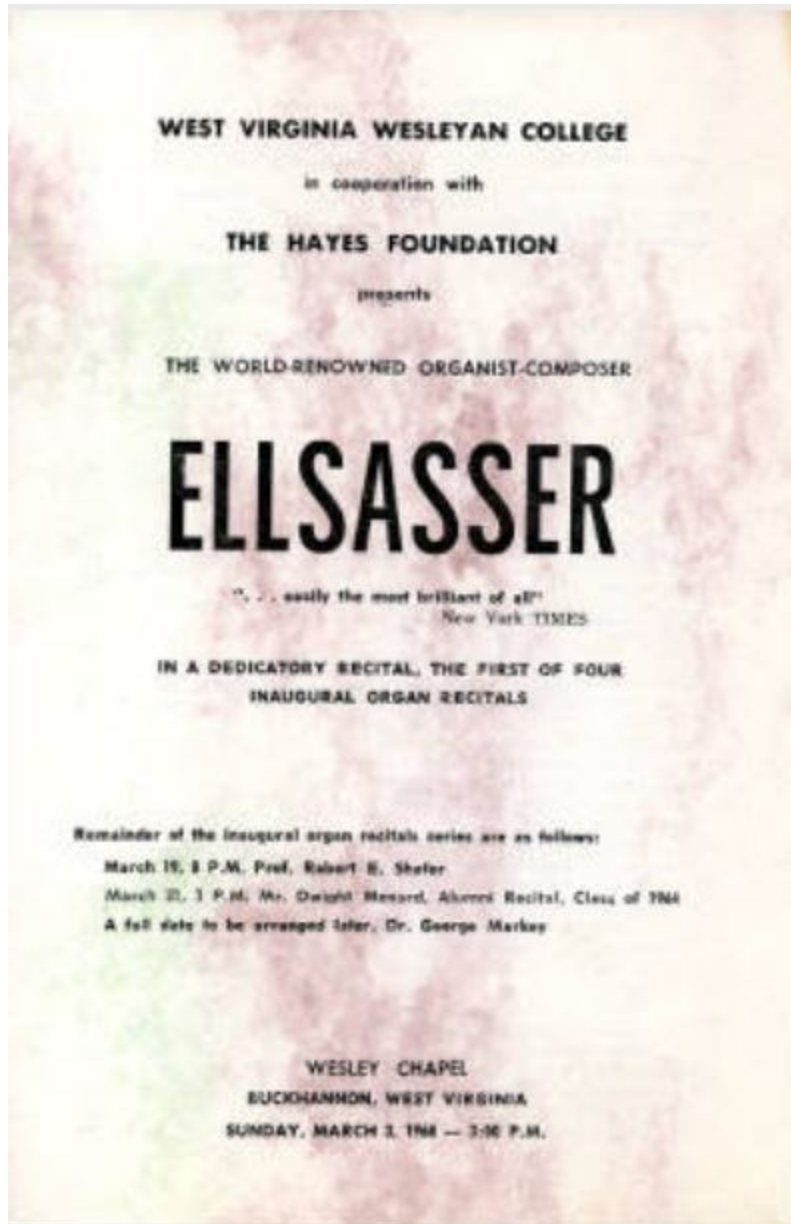
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#### **FOUR Dedication Concerts**

This was so much excitement over the organ, that there was a series of concerts to dedicate it. They began with a well-known organ prodigy, followed by a faculty concert, an alumni concert, and ended with a well-known organ performer and teacher. [Click here](#) to see the full program for the March 3rd Concert.

1. March 3, 1968 (3:00 pm) by Richard Ellasser.

2. March 19, 1968 (8:15 pm) by Dr. Robert E. Shafer
3. March 31, 1968 (3:00 pm) by Dwight Menard (1964)
4. November 19, 1968 (8:00 pm) by Dr. George Markey (Princeton)





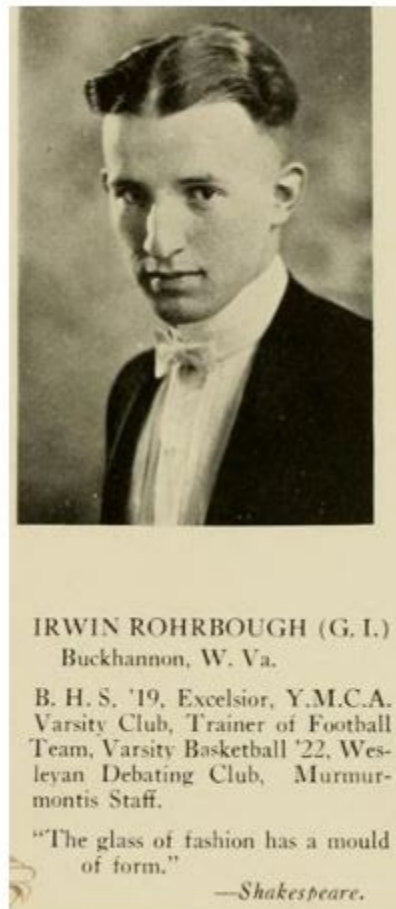
**Mystery Solved. Thank you, G.I. Rohrbough!**

The January 1966 edition of the West Virginia Wesleyan College Bulletin reported that :

*The organ, to be built at a cost of \$92,900, has been contributed to the College by a donor wishing to remain anonymous for the present. The installation of the Casavant organ will permit Wesleyan a great opportunity to provide outstanding concerts for all of central West Virginia.*

It did not remain anonymous, however.





Etta Maude Lynch was born in 1875, and died in 1936. This photograph of her was located on Find-a-Grave 130768195. This was way before we had a yearbook from which to locate a photograph. Irwin's yearbook information in the 1923 Murmurmantis shows that he was a very active part of the college community.

Irwin went on to be a very successful educator and administrator, serving as president of multiple colleges. You can read more about him [here](#). He also served on the West Virginia Wesleyan Board of Trustees from 1967-76, and through his gift of the organ in Wesley Chapel, he is still contributing to events at the school. In 1940 he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Pedagogy degree.



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## Inspiration and Appreciation

The 4,174 pipes, 54 stops, and 75 real ranks of pipes involved have attracted world-famous organists to come and play in Wesley Chapel. Wesleyan Giants such as Robert E. Shafer, Bobby Loftis, J. Peter Berkovitz, Marguerite Bostonia, and Melody Meadows have played it and inspired their students – many of whom have become master organists in their own rights. Among them are Peter DuBois, Jessica Scott, Brett Miller, Zachary Allen, Abby Woods Haake, Peter Infanger, Greg Blair, Alfred Kanagaraj, Edward Byram, and Kayoko Funada, but there are many many more.

Other notable people include Eunyoung Kim, a Fulbright, and Pamela Balch, President of WVWC from 2006-16.

And thousands of us have benefited from the music resulting from this gift.



